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S E R M O N, &c.

—*I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me
from all my fears.* DAVID.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

28 ИЮНЬ 18



Библиотека Государственного исторического музея
ДАВИД

БИБЛИОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ СЛУЖБА

THE RESOLUTE SAINT.

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S E R M O N

On JOB xiii. 15. FIRST PART.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

Some account of the experience of one, who after
much distress of mind about the salvation of
his soul, arrived to a comfortable hope; and
the way in which he attained it.

By JOHN HAYDON.

Blessed is that man, that maketh the Lord his trust.

DAVID.

B R I S T O L:

Printed by W. PINE: Sold by T. EVANS, and the other
Booksellers in Bristol: S. HARWARD, in Tewksbury; W.
MASON, in Pershore; and J. BUCKLAND, in London.

И О М Я Е З



P R E F A C E.

AS I was looking over some of my papers consigned to destruction, I found notes upon Job xiii. 15. first part, which I had prepared for the congregation at Horsley, when I was their minister. It was immediately, and powerfully impressed upon my mind, to spare, improve, and print them, for the benefit of dejected and disconsolate Christians. By so doing, I thought they might be useful, when I am laid in the silent grave. And the unexpected assistance afforded me, when I again studied upon the subject, gives me some pleasing expectation, that God designs to do good by it.

I desire to be humbly thankful, for the accounts I have received, from several places, of the advantage which some persons have met with, by reading my discourses upon in-dwelling sin, which have past the third edition. And as I have laboured in the ensuing pages, to support the weak, and comfort the feeble-minded, I hope through a divine blessing, those ends will in some measure be accomplished.

Should any profit arise from this small publication, it shall be remitted to the Treasurer of the Bristol Education

P R E F A C E.

cation Society, for the advantage of that excellent and important institution.

The experience connected with the sermon, may be beneficial to some, who are or may be under a work of real conversion. By reading their own case, they may behold it in a new favourable light, and bless God, that they ever saw it in print.

It is my earnest prayer, that the God of all grace, will accompany the reading of this little performance, with his spirit and blessing.

PERSHORE, Oct.

J. H.

20, 1780.

4 OC 58

JOB XIII. 15. FIRST PART.

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

TRUSTING in GOD, is an indispensable duty, and a privilege inexpressible. Since man has fallen off from God into himself, with a mind totally alienated from him, it is amazing that he should have any benevolent regard for his apostate creature, and permit him to approach his majesty, with the least degree of hope, or pleasing expectation. But this he certainly does. Let him take hold of my strength, is the gracious language of Jehovah.† And he has promised, not only to keep them in perfect peace, whose minds are stayed on him, but has also assured us, that he takes pleasure in them who fear him, and who hope in his mercy.‡

Job doubtless had some glimmering view of divine goodness. My text, is not an exclamation of despair, but determined confidence in God. And if he intended his eternal ruin, he was resolved, that destruction should meet him prostrate before the throne of grace, with the hand of faith stretched out, to lay hold of it.

This good man, may be considered, as an unparalleled instance of affliction, amongst all the

A. A. S. sons

† Isa. xxvii. 15. ‡ Psa. 147. 11.

sons of adversity. The arrows of every kind of anguish and distress, were levelled at him ; they winged their way in a sure direction, each one hit its mark, and met in him as their common center. He was awfully bereaved of his substance ; some was seized by the Sabeans and Chaldeans, and the residue consumed, by the fire of God from heaven. He who holds the wind in his fist, let it out with resistless fury, upon the house where the children of Job were feasting ; it smote the four corners thereof, so that it fell upon them and destroyed them all. His body was cloathed with pollution and misery : God having smote him with sore boils, from the crown of his head, to the sole of his feet. The affections of his wife were alienated from him ; his servants were disobedient. And he was such an horrible spectacle, that his friends, though unimpress'd with the feelings of humanity, and viewing him as an abominable hypocrite, yet stood aghast, and were speechless to him seven days and seven nights.

So long a time they held their peace to show,
A reverence due, to such prodigious woe.

BLACKMORE.

Had this good man experienced, that as his afflictions abounded, his consolations also abounded, he might have been superior to them all, and gloried in tribulation. But God frowned upon him, and his wrath seemed to burn against him. The envenomed instruments, of apparent vengeance, absorbed his spirits, and his soul was overwhelmed. Hear his doleful cry. The arrows of the almighty are within me, the poison whereof, drinketh

drinketh up my spirit: The terrors of God, do set themselves in array against me. §

Thus it was with this excellent man, all God's waves, and his billows rolled over him. And is it not strange, that his faith was not lost, and that hope and comfort, did not take their final leave of him? But we see, that though he was sorely afflicted, God would not give him up, either to natural or eternal death. A secret power upheld him. Notwithstanding the almighty stood over him, as it were, with the sword of justice unsheathed; yet, with princely and heroic courage, and invincible confidence, he declared, that though God should slay him, he would trust in him. His faith even in these circumstances, grew up to assurance, for he says, v. 16. He also shall be my salvation. He knew, that he had not to do with an absolute God, with God as a consuming fire, but with a God in Christ, determined to reconcile the elect world to himself, not imputing their iniquities to them. He was well acquainted with that ransom, for the sake of which, God had said, deliver him from going down into the pit. The eye of his faith was frequently fixed upon his living Redeemer; and he was persuaded, that because his Redeemer lived, he should live also. And that though after his skin, worms should destroy his body, yet in his flesh, however pain'd and putrified now, he should see God, and be unspeakably happy in his blissful and glorious presence, to all eternity.

In treating of this noble, and striking portion of sacred writ, I would

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I. Describe

§ Job vi. 4.

I. Describe the nature of a good man's trust in God.

II. Point out some reasons, to shew why we should make God our trust. And

III. Present to your view, some of those seasons, wherein we are peculiarly called upon, to exercise a fixed hope, and resolved trust in God, to deliver us from the evils we now feel, or which we fear will come upon us. I am

I. To describe the nature, of a good man's trust in God.

Trusting in God, being an act of the soul, it is much better known by experience than description. Mental operations lie deep, they cannot easily, if at all, be fully brought to light, and communicated to our fellow mortals. Here language fails; and it is therefore but a very imperfect account, that I can give, of the saints trust in God.

'The best conception that I can form of it is, That it is an act of the mind, whereby a person depends upon God alone through Jesus Christ, to remove the evils he feels, to preserve him from the evils he fears, and to obtain the blessings he wishes and prays for, with a believing expectation, that God will not disappoint his hope.' Every refuge besides God, he looks upon as insufficient to secure him, all props, as unable to support him, and all the springs of help and comfort, as broken cisterns that can hold no water. This inclines him to turn the eye of faith to God; and rest upon him, and his precious promises, for grace

grace and glory, and all the good things which he does, or may stand in need of.

As I intend to point out some of the special seasons, wherein the Christian is called upon to trust in God, I shall dismiss this head, with just mentioning some marks, of a true, genuine, and beneficial reliance upon him.

And this trust must certainly be in, and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Job expected no favor from God, but on account of his living Redeemer, and the atonement which he intended to make in the fullness of time, for the sins of his people. Had not this been the case, his trust would have been presumption; offensive to the holiness, and provoking to the justice of God; and the issue his eternal destruction. But he knew, that his glorious Ransomer, had engaged to deliver him from the wrath to come; therefore he ventured to say in the depth of adversity, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. We may depend upon it, that unless we take Christ with us in the arms of faith, when we approach God in the way of dependence, we shall never behold his face with comfort; and the arm of his power, will not be stretched out to help and save us.

Where moreover our trust in God, meets with his approbation, it is exercised in a firm reliance, on the aids, and under the influence of his holy Spirit. Through Christ we have access, by one spirit unto the father.* All the endeavours of the soul to rest upon God, in seasons of trial and difficulty, will prove abortive, will avail nothing, unless supernatural strength is communicated, by that good spirit, that worketh all in all. And we should never expect, that God will hearken to our prayers, or send forth

* Ephesians ii. 18,

forth his power to our relief, unless we rely upon him in the way of our duty, and in the use of proper means to help ourselves.|| A resolute confidence in the divine favor, while we slight his commands, and give up ourselves to an indolent neglect of his institutions, will rather bring down the tokens of his displeasure, than the blessings of his grace. David says, trust in the Lord, and do good.† It will be fruitless to trust in God's mercy, unless we are obedient to his will. No peculiar help should be expected from him, to relieve us, while we live in the wilful violation of his righteous precepts. To such he says, what have you to do, to take my name into your lips. We are to commit the keeping of our souls, and indeed all our concerns to God, in the way of well doing.‡ Trusting in God to obtain favor from him, if we are rebellious, and disobedient to his holy law, will be deemed an audacious provocation of the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth; and his anger and wrath, will be kindled against us.§ Read and ponder in your hearts, this *thunder-clap* of sacred writ, and stand in awe and sin-not. And relinquish all hope in God, while you are under the commanding power of any darling lust.

In the last place here, a fiducial recumbrance on God, in a season of extremity, is generally attended with composure, and sometimes with great tranquility of mind. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.|| This trust, keeps the good man steady and fixed, calm and resigned in trials and calamities; which otherwise

|| Exod. xiv. 35. † Psa. 37. 3. ‡ i Pet. iv. 19.

§ Deut. xxix. 19. 20. || Isa. xxvi. 3.

otherwise, would be insupportable, and overwhelm him. This has been the comfortable experience of many a child of God; and was frequently David's experience. In the 13th Psalm, we have an account, and a sad one too, of his being plunged in the depth of distress: but having recourse to God, his usual refuge, he says, v. 5. I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. Here is an astonishing change; the good man a little before, was sinking into gloomy despair, but being enabled to go to God by fervent prayer, and rest upon him, by a steady faith, his soul is enlarged and elevated; and he breaks forth into praises, and thankful acknowledgments, of the divine goodness to him. And seeing God never disappointed his faith and hope, he pledged his word for it, that they who trust in the Lord, shall be as mount Zion, which shall never be moved.^t They are fixed on the rock of ages; therefore, though tempests may beat upon them, and sometimes they may have but little comfort, yet they shall never be overthrown by the worst and most violent storms they may ever meet with. Wait therefore on the Lord, and be of good courage, for however faint and feeble you may sometimes be, he will strengthen your hearts, all ye that hope in the Lord.

Now let us make a solemn pause, and enter upon the necessary, and important work, of self-examination; and each one address his intellectual and immortal part, in some such language as this. O my soul, whatever thou art ignorant of, be not a stranger to thyself. What can it profit thee, couldst thou know, and gain the whole world, if thou art unacquainted with thyself; and thou

^t Psalm 105. 1.

thou shouldest be for ever lost. O my soul, thou livest amidst sins and sorrows, snares and temptations. Thine enemies are many, thy faithful friends are few. Thy own existence, is a spring of innumerable evils, and thou hast also, to grapple with the powers of darkness. What course dost thou take, in thy seasons of distress? Dost thou sit in sullen silence; or make flesh thine arm? Hast thou recourse to human policy? Or dost thou expect deliverance, because of the purity of thine heart, and the integrity of thy life and conversation? Or, dost thou make the Lord thy refuge, and rely on the power and wisdom, the grace and faithfulness, of thy covenant God in Christ Jesus? If this is the way thou takest; whatever may be thine affliction, hope thou in God, for thou shalt yet praise him, and assuredly know, that he is thy God, and the God of thy salvation.

In thine own apprehensions, thou mayst be sinking into the depths of trouble, and wrapt up in impenetrable darkness; but thy God will hold thee up, thy Lord will be a light unto thee. Follow David's example, and thou shalt in due time, enjoy the sure mercies of David. He waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined his ear, brought him out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, set him upon an impregnable rock, and established his goings.†

Could I now turn to a fellow-mortal, and say to him with certainty, this is the man, who maketh not God his trust—The most copious, and expressive words, would fail me, were I to attempt to set forth his wretched, and miserable condition. But this he will be made sensible of, unless grace shall prevent, by his unsupported burdens and afflictions, to which human nature is perpetually exposed;

† Psalm 40. 1. 2.

exposed; by the dreadful horrors of an hopeless death, and by suffering the wrath, and eternal vengeance of the almighty Jehovah, in the regions of blackness and darkness, where the worm of an accusing conscience will never die, and the fire of his fierce wrath and indignation, will never be extinguished. I would now,

II. Point out some reasons, to show why we should at all times make God our trust. Though he slay me, says Job, yet will I trust in him.

To trust any where else, is folly in the abstract. It is leaning on a broken reed, and looking for supplies from empty cisterns. All creatures, means, and instruments without God, are a mere void, and a blank. There is no help in them; and could they utter forth an audible voice, they would one and all cry, we are vain and weak, dying, fading, and passing away, and shall disappoint the expectations of all those, who look for help, and happiness from us.

Besides it must be very offensive to God, when men make any thing short of him, the foundation of their hope and confidence. In so doing, they slight and neglect his being, his constant agency, in upholding, and managing, all the productions of his power, and the subjects of his government: and cast, as it were, contempt upon all his adorable, and infinite perfections. Surely conduct like this, will not fail to draw down such marks of the divine displeasure, as will frustrate and disappoint, all the pleasing hopes of those, who live without God in the world.

Many arguments might be advanced, to demonstrate, that it is our indispensable duty to trust continually in God, for all we want in time

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and to all eternity. But it may be sufficient to lay only a few before you. And

I. God is the highest, the chiefest, and supreme of all beings. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength. His power is invincible, and his will cannot be controvuled. He does what he pleaseth amongst the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth. His works of creation and providence are a stupendous display, of awful majesty, and absolute dominion over universal nature. Let us see a little of what is said of him in that book, out of which I have chosen my text, and then judge, whether we are not under indisputable obligations, and called upon by prudence, and a due regard to our own interest, to maintain a constant dependance upon God, for all we want and wish for.

Hear what is said, of this tremendously exellent being.* Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prosper'd ? which removeth mountains and overturneth them. Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea, which doth great things past finding out, and wonders without number. Lo, these are part of his ways, but the thunder of his power, who can understand.[†] If there is any thing therefore in unbounded strength, and sovereign authority, to render an object worthy of trust, we here plainly, and abundantly behold them in God.

II. The

* Job ix. 4. † Job xxvi. 24

II. The all-powerful Jehovah, is pleasingly good, as well as dreadfully great. His tender mercies, and the riches of his grace, are equal to the thunder of his power. If we had no knowledge of God, but as a glorious and absolute monarch, we should have no encouragement to draw nigh to him, much less to cast ourselves, and our weighty concerns upon him. Instead of flying to him as our refuge, we should tremble and say, who can stand before this holy Lord God? It is benignity and loving kindness, that draws out our hope and confidence in him. How excellent is thy loving kindness O God says David, therefore the children of men put their trust, under the shadow of thy wings.^I Animated by the prospect of a God reconciled in Christ Jesus, rich in mercy, ready to forgive, willing, not only to receive, but cordially embrace a returning and repenting sinner; surely such may, and should go to him, with an unshaken persuasion of the kindest reception,

III. God not only permits, but commands us to trust in him. Sinners are called upon to commit their souls to Christ the mediator, for acceptance with God; so they are also to trust in him, as a God reconciled and at peace, in and through what he has done and suffered, for poor, lost, perishing, repenting, returning prodigals. Scriptures might be multiply'd, to shew, that God is willing to be rely'd on, for safety and defence. But one or two may be sufficient.^J Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord, he is their help and their shield. So there is a command given forth,^{||} to depend on God, with a powerful reason why he should do so. Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah, is everlasting strength. God might justly have required

^I Psalm xxxvi. 7. [§] Psalm cxv. 11. ^{||} Isa. xxvi. 4.

of us, only to fear him, as a being of perfect righteousness, and spotless purity, but his giving us encouragement to rely on his goodness, and hope in his mercy, should fill our souls with love and gratitude, and our mouths with thanksgiving and praise.

IV. Good men in all past ages have trusted in God, especially in their seasons of exigency and distress. Therefore such in all ages to come, may do the same. We are to follow them, who, through faith and paucity, are now inheriting the promises. Time would fail me to enumerate those just men, recorded in scripture, who lived by faith. The epistle to the Hebrews, is adorned with a catalogue of such worthies as these. They knew the name of God, to be a strong tower, and run into it, and found safety. And not only these, but all, who have an experimental acquaintance with the divine perfections will confide in them. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee. And there is great reason for the good man so to do, for it is added, Thou hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Poor Job, was rich in faith, and ennobled by an heroic confidence in God, in the midst of poverty and disgrace, and all the outward disadvantages, which the human mind can conceive of.

I would now only observe, that God has always honored a steady dependence upon him, by granting the mercy desired, or something equivalent to it.* Our fathers trusted in thee: They trusted, and thou didst deliver them; They cried unto thee, and were delivered, they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. The sweet singer of Israel, moreover says,

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* Psalm xxii. 4. 5.

my heart trusted in thee, and I am blessed; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song, will I praise him.† I would not close this part of my subject, without holding forth to the eye of your faith, that precious portion of sacred writ, which we have in 2 Sam. xxii. 31. The word of the Lord is tried, he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.

These are some of the reasons, why good men should rely on God at all times, especially in peculiar times of need, which they are liable to, and often exercised with, in the land of their pilgrimage.

Let each of us now turn within, and say, O my soul, bless and praise the God of thy mercies, and all that is within thee, bless his holy name, for opening a door of hope, in the valley of Achor; and discovering himself to thee, as able and willing, to relieve and support thee, under the many burdens, which often press thee down, while thou art passing through this desert land, this horrible wilderness.

Thy sins might have provoked God, to grant thee no help in time, and make thee miserable for ever. He might have appointed a flaming cherub, to guard his throne of majesty and mercy, and send thee to hell for daring to approach it; but instead of that, thou hast the greatest liberty, and all the encouragement thou canst wish for, to go to God, as his dear servant Job did, and say with a full persuasion of an happy issue, 'Though thou slayest me, yet will I trust in thee. I am now

III. To lay before you, some of the seasons, in which we are loudly called upon to exercise a fixed

† Psalm xxviii. 7.

fixed hope, and resolved trust in God, to deliver us from present and future dreaded evils.

We are taught by the various afflictive providences, with which we are exercised in the journey of life, to expect, that through much tribulation, we shall enter into the celestial kingdom. Innumerable evils, both of a temporal and spiritual nature, are our constant attendants; and they will be so, until we are uncloathed of this body of sinful flesh. We are heirs to this unpleasing inheritance, being born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. The people of God, are represented as bearing more trials and calamities, than other men. For which reason, St. Paul says, if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable. They have two kinds of affliction, which carnal men have not. The heavy load of a body of sin, which oftentimes makes them cry out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me. This is the invariable language of every heaven born soul. And they are always more or less, persecuted for their piety and profession. If ye were of the world, said our blessed Lord, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hates you.* No sooner did the image of God appear in our world, but it was opposed and spurned at, by unrenewed nature. They who are after the flesh, have always despised and ill-used them that are after the spirit. Cain the first murderer hated his brother Abel, because he was a good man.† The same antipathy, has been transmitted down to the present generation; for they, who are justly esteemed, as the excellent of the earth, are often rendered very uneasy, on account of the opposing malignant spirit of the world.

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* John xv. 19. † Genesis iv. 4. 8.

Besides all this, many sorrows of a different nature annoy us, and sting us like serpents, while we are passing along this dreary land. Here are many and various corporal maladies. Our worldly circumstances, often plunge us into almost extricable difficulties. Our near relations and christian friends, may throw some bitter ingredients into the cup, which providence hands out to us. We may be brought to the brink of the grave, and the borders of an awful eternity, and while these dreadful scenes are opening before us, we may also be perplexed on every side, and almost despond of relief. Our souls may be so much dejected and cast down within us, as to cause us to fear, that hoping in God will be very offensive to him.

Should this be the good man's case, he has liberty to trust in God for deliverance out of his afflictions ; or, that he will cause them to promote his truest interest, and work together for his eternal advantage. It is an experienced truth, and what we may rely upon with the utmost certainty, that all things shall work together for good, to them who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

Job in a season of great perplexity, when his mind was much discomposed, his spirits vastly hurried, and every effort of his soul, to obtain help from God, seemingly disregarded, even in these circumstances he was persuaded, that all would be well in the end. Behold says he, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward but I cannot perceive him, on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him, he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him : but he knoweth the way that I take ; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. David was persuaded,

swaded, that if he should be surrounded with great tribulation, God would support him under, and deliver him out of his trouble. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me, thou wilt stretch forth thine hand and save me. ¶ All the spiritual seed of Jacob, shall assuredly know, that God never said unto them, Seek ye my face in vain. Every gracious praying soul, though he may be plunged in the depths of affliction, and see no way to escape, shall in due time have his enlargement. This may be depended upon, from the infallible oracles of God. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. § Thus you see, that those who fear God should be persuaded, that notwithstanding all the dark and gloomy dispensations, with which they may be exercised, he will bear them up, and make a way for their escape. This poor man cry'd, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his trouble. ||

The act of faith, which Job put forth in the words of my text, had respect, I apprehend chiefly to his eternal welfare. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. For what would he trust him? Surely for something beyond the grave, and the limits of time. He would trust him for the salvation of his soul; for glory, immortality, and life everlasting. And every child of God, whether he can see it or not, has a right to put forth the same confidence in him: and comfort himself with the same expectation from him. There is the same ground and reason for one as well as another. They are all children of the same fa-

ther,

¶ Psa. cxxxviii. 7. § Psa. xxxii. 67. || Psa. xxiv. 6.

ther, interested in the same covenant of grace, and bought with the same price. They are all partakers of the same spirit, cloathed with the same righteousness, and have a joint and common interest in the heavenly inheritance! Fear not little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

But as there are many things which check and restrain the exertions of faith and hope in good men, I would point out some of the seasons of their spiritual conflict and mourning; and endeavour to say something, which may be calculated to encourage them, to exercise a comfortable hope and trust in God, in those times of trial and affliction.

I shall begin with the perplexities and distresses of mind, which the people of God are generally exercised with, when they first enter upon the truly religious life. And when this is the case, he who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts. And as light makes manifest, the poor sinner *now* beholds himself as a vile and wretched, a lost, ruined, and undone creature. So it was with Paul, as soon as the commandment was brought home to him with a convincing power, sin revived, and he died. He saw himself a polluted condemned sinner. When a man has a sight of his past sins, and universal depravity; when he beholds his great and aggravated crimes, set as it were in battle array against him, in anguish of soul he cries out, Woe is me, for I am undone; is there, can there be salvation, for such a distinguished rebel as I have been? Surely, the heart of no christian was ever so bad as mine, nor his life tarnished, with so many blemishes. Will the word of God

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admit

* Luke xii. 32.

admit of such a one as I am, to rely upon Christ, and hope for a kind reception from him? Yes certainly it does; for you being a weary and heavy laden sinner, are invited by himself, to go to him; and he has promised to relieve and comfort your troubled spirit. Come unto me says he, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. The promise you see, is to *all* that go to Christ; he declares he will not cast them out, therefore he will receive them graciously, and love them freely. It is not the number, nor the greatness of sins that stand between Christ and the sinner, but the love of sin, and want of reliance upon him. You are now confessing and forsaking, therefore you shall find mercy. Pardon belongs to you, though you have been guilty of all manner of sin, and even of blasphemy.* When the prodigal came to himself, and humbly acknowledged his transgressions, the bowels of his father yearned over him, and his arms were open to receive him. Hope therefore in God, for you shall in due time praise him, for the light of his countenance, and the joys of his salvation.

The want of knowledge in divine things, makes some fear, that they are in a state of unregenerate darkness. They read their bibles, but see little, as they think, into the true meaning of them. They hear evangelical truths preached, but their acquaintance with them is very small. They read in the sacred word, that all God's children are taught of the Lord; but say they, we are so ignorant, that we fear God never taught us.

If you know so much of the dreadful evil of sin, as to make you abhor it, and see so much of the sweetness, suitableness, and glory of Christ, as to render

* Mat. xii. 31.

render him the most desirable object in your apprehensions; conclude upon it, that your knowledge, though it may not be extensive, is saving; a fruit of the spirit, and a certain sign, that you, who were sometime darkness, are now light in the Lord. There doubtless may be a sanctified heart, where there is a weak, confused, and forgetful head. The blind man's eyes were really opened, though his sight was so imperfect, that he saw men as trees walking. There are in Christ, weak and ignorant babes, as well as knowing and strong men. Be assured of this, that godly sincerity, and one drop of real grace, are worth an ocean of knowledge. And what you know not now, you shall know hereafter. You shall know as you are known, and see as you are seen.

The saint moreover, for so I will call him, may be tempted to disbelieve the being of a God, the Messiahship of Christ, the holy scriptures, and all religion; and fear, on account of these things, that he has no part, or lot in the inheritance of the saints in light.

To such distressed and dejected souls, I would say, and believe it to be true, that they are no more answerable for those shocking thoughts, which force themselves upon them, contrary to their wills, wishes and prayers, than they are for a thief's breaking into their houses, or the plague infesting their families. These tares in the field, were sown by an enemy, An enemy hath done it. Remember that the damsel who cried out to preserve her virtue, when a violent attack was made upon it, was deemed innocent, and suffered no punishment. *Neither shall you, if you hate vain thoughts, shudder at vile imaginations, and earnestly desire, to serve, fear, and delight in God,

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and

* Deut. xxii. 27.

and his holy law. Therefore hope thou in God, for he *is your God*, notwithstanding it may be Satan suggested to you, that there is no God.

The powerful working of corruptions of various kinds, in gracious souls, oftentimes greatly enfeebles their faith and confidence in God. They are ready to think, that such polluted creatures as they are can never be the subjects of divine grace, or be really acquainted, with the regenerating, and sanctifying influence of the holy spirit.

Here let it be considered, that grace is not the only inhabitant, that dwells in the earthly houses of our tabernacles. There is a sad inmate, which will keep its residence there, until the house is pulled down. The flesh does, and will lust against the spirit in all good men, and strive to get the mastery; but it never shall, so long as those words remain true, Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. Say then, notwithstanding you are pestered with a body of sin, why art thou dejected, O my soul, why art thou so much disquieted within me, still hope and trust in God, for a full and final deliverance, from all sin, sorrow, and imperfection.

But it so happens sometimes, that a good man falls into actual sin; he is off his guard, temptations powerfully attack him, and his iniquities like the wind, carry him away. When this is the case, his conscience is wounded, his hope is well nigh gone, and he is inclined to think, that he is left of God, and devoted to destruction. He is ready to say, had I been a partaker of grace, I should never have been left, to be guilty of those abominable crimes, which I justly stand chargeable with.

This

This is a real cause of sorrowful repentance, and deep humiliation, but not of despair. Read and ponder those gracious words in your heart, which we have in 1 John ii. 1, 2. My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, And he is the propitiation for our sins. The best of men have committed some of the worst of sins. I mention not this, to encourage carnal security, and the practices of wickedness, God forbid, but to comfort the spirits of the humble, and the hearts of contrite ones. You may say with truth as David did, iniquities prevail against me; yet, if you groan under the weight of a body of sin and death, and pray and strive against it; and have recourse to the blood of Christ for pardon, you may also add, as he does, as for our iniquities, thou shalt purge them away.† You have an equal right with him, to exercise faith, in the pardoning love of God.

There is another grievous complaint, made by many of God's people. Say they, we are sometimes so dull and stupid, so much indisposed to duty, and find so little comfort in it, that we are ready to conclude, we were never quickened to a divine life.

This stupor and inactivity, may arise at times, from the weakness of the nerves, the feebleness of the flesh, and scarcity of the animal spirits. It is possible for a good man, with all the exertions he is capable of, to be asleep, when he should, if it were in his power, be at prayer, and dull and heavy, under the sound of the gospel, and contrast at the same time, little or no guilt in the sight of God. This I partly gather, from what our Lord said, in excuse for his disciples, when they did not

watch

† Psalm lxv. 3.

watch one hour with him, although it was near the last hour, before he was hung upon the cross. The spirit said he is willing, but the flesh is weak. He imputed their inattention, not to the sinfulness, but to the infirmity of their natures. God remembers our frame, he considers that we are but dust.

The case above-mentioned, might sometimes be owing to criminal neglect, the want of watching, and keeping the heart. In proportion to our inactivity in this, our hearts will be carnal in our attendance on religious worship, formal and lifeless, and spiritual comforts, will stand at a great distance from us.

But it will sometimes so happen, that the most conscientious of God's servants, may have little divine consolation, even while they strictly observe their duty. By an act of sovereignty he suspends the soul clearing, and soul quickening influence of his spirit.§ Before I speak to another ground of fear, which has occasioned great uneasiness to some tender minds, I would observe, that what sometimes gives being to our doubts, may justly strengthen our faith and hope. We feel great deadness, therefore are ready to think that we are really dead: but *feeling this*, and lamenting on the account of it; wishing and praying, that all the powers of our souls, may be governed by a divine influence at all times, especially when we are engaged in the exercises of piety and devotion, is a certain indication, that it may, with great propriety be said to us, You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Hungering and thirsting, are as great signs of life, as eating and drinking. A good man may be as much satisfied, in regard to the safety of his state,

state, from his desiring the sincere milk of the word, as when he is nourished and refreshed by it.

A child of God, is more distinguished by his cravings than his enjoyments, by the piety and rectitude of his will, than by his performing external acts of obedience to God. In these he is very deficient, even while he longs for perfection. I have here that excellent man St. Paul with me, who said, to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not ; and the good that I would do, I do not. He doubtless did good, but not in so many instances, and to that degree of goodness, which his soul breathed after and longed for.

The case being thus, O christian, with the best of men, let none of the things before-mentioned, however grievous they may have been to you, prevent your addressing God in the language of Job, who reposed a firm confidence in him, amidst many sad discouragements, and said, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

I shall speak only to one more cause of distress to some good people, who would not wilfully offend God upon any account. And that is, the want of assurance ; their not having as they think, the spirit of God, to witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God. They read in the sacred oracles, that they who believe, have the witness in themselves, which witness, they think they are unacquainted with.

In the first place here I would observe, that the most extraordinary conversions, and most remarkable consolations, have been found amongst those, who have been greater sinners, than are commonly met with amongst the regenerate. This may be designed to bear up their spirits, and keep them from being over-much dejected, on account of their past, abominable lives and conversations. I shall take notice only of one instance, in support

port of this, though doubtless there are thousands; and that is, Mary Magdalen. She is called a sinner, by way of distinction, perhaps she was one of the vilest persons, in the place where she lived: she was possessed of seven devils.|| But from her extraordinary love to Christ, it is certain, that she had uncommon testimonies of the love of Christ to her soul. For our love to him, rises in proportion to the manifestations of his love to us. What is said in Mark xvi. 9. is much to be noted. He appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Those persons, whose lives and actions have been more within the verge of morality, when it pleaseth God to call them by his grace, though the change is great, yet the sensations of it are not so deep and powerful, as are felt and known by those of an opposite character. And as it is not usual, for their tribulation because of sin so much to abound, as it does in some others, so their consolations are more scanty and less abounding.

In regard to the inward witness of the spirit, mentioned in Rom. viii. 16. doubtless in some instances, it may go thus far. A christian may find in himself the marks and signs of his being an adopted child of God; and the divine spirit, may come down upon him, with such power, as to give him the fullest assurance that he is so. But in others, the witness of the spirit, may be no more than this. By his renewing and sanctifying operations upon their souls, he communicates a child-like nature, and witnesseth to them in his inspired word, that they are the children of God. Now this evidence is as good as the other, though it

may

may not, so much as that, give peace and comfort, and an unshaken hope of everlasting life.

We are told, if any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his: That is, he has no visible interest in him, consequently, if any man has the spirit of Christ, though he may have no feeling evidence of it, by superadded operations of divine power upon his soul, he certainly must belong to him, and have a saving interest in him. If you feel the power of sin subdued, if you hunger and thirst after larger measures of sanctifying grace, and if Christ be precious to you, and you rely upon the merit of his blood, and his perfect righteousness, for the salvation of your soul, you may as much believe, that you shall be saved, as if you could put aside the curtain of mortality, and read your name in the plainest characters, in the Lamb's book of life.

Should this discourse appear in the world, it may contribute to the peace and establishment of some of God's people, if I present the reader, with a brief account, of the experience of one who was long exercised with doubts and fears, because the spirit of God did not work upon him in such a way, and in such a powerful manner, as he expected, when he sought, with great earnestness, the salvation of his soul.

The Narrative shall be in his own words.

When I was about eighteen years of age, I conversed with one of my father's men about religion. He being a zealous Calvinist, endeavoured to prevail upon me, to believe the doctrine of election. This opinion, I thought very harsh and severe, and opposed it all in my power. But after some time, searching the scriptures more im-

D partially,

partially, and being willing to give up my understanding, to their infallible dictates, the cloud of ignorance and prejudice, was removed, and I saw nothing more plain, than that there was a remnant, according to the election of grace. * Now the chief object of my pursuit, was to know, that I was beloved and elected of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. But I soon learned, that God's elect, are in his time convinced of sin, renewed by grace, and enabled to fly for refuge to the Savior of lost sinners. My earnest desire therefore, was to see my undone and wretched condition by nature and practice, and to be enabled to rely alone upon Christ, to be delivered from the wrath to come. I tried to recollect my sins, and set them before me in their most aggravating circumstances, that I might be deeply humbled, loath and abhor myself, and greatly see my need of an interest in the blessed Redeemer.

But I could not attain that sorrow for sin I wished for ; and therefore mourned because I could not mourn as I would. I thirsted for thirstiness, I wept for tears. My desires after soul-trouble and anguish of mind, for what I had been and done against God, were very strong and persevering. At length, meeting with a book of Mr. Bunyan's, entitled, Come and welcome to Jesus Christ, I found a passage, which exactly suited my case, and is as follows :

' Terror and horror on account of sin, do not prove a person, to be under a work of conversion, because Cain and Judas had much of that, and yet were strangers to the saving grace of God. Some are brought by smooth waters, others by rough, some he takes the yoke off

' their

' their jaws, and lays meat before them.' This, and more to the same purpose, were means of removing that anxiety which I had, to be extremely terrified, with a fright and sense of my sin.

Being very apt to refuse spiritual comfort, another difficulty, soon started up in my mind. I thought that the work of conversion, was always effected by the preaching of the gospel. And this might partly arise, from those words in James i. 18, Of his own will, begat he us, with the word of truth, and from Rom. x. 17. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. This I did not experience, and feared that God had not begun a good work upon my soul. I therefore prayed night and day, to the God of all grace, that he would be pleased to bring home his word with such power upon my soul, as to renew and save it. When I attended the morning service on a Lord's-day, the language of my heart was, O that this may be the time of my regeneration. My wishes not being answered, in the afternoon, my cry was, Lord work effectually by this sermon. But not feeling the operations of his gracious power then, I used to go to the evening lecture, hoping and longing, that God would meet with me there, and grant me what I so much, and so eagerly longed for. Being constantly disappointed, I went on heavily mourning over my wretched condition.

So foolish was I and ignorant, that I apprehended, God invariably brought his people home to himself in this way. But by conversing with some experienced christians, I learned, that God by very different means and instruments, wrought effectually upon the human soul, and I was confirmed in this from Job xxxiii 14—17. where I observed, that God sometimes brought his peo-

ple home to himself, by speaking to them in dreams and visions of the night.

I surmounted this difficulty, but was still uneasy, because I thought in seeking my salvation, I had a greater regard to my own happiness, than the glory of Christ, and imagined that he would not accept of such a selfish creature as I was. But I was relieved from this trouble, by conversing with a minister, who told me, it could not be expected that a person at first setting out, to seek an interest in Christ, should have his views so much for his glory, as his own welfare, because a sense of his lost condition, impresses his mind so much, that he can hardly think of any thing else, but his recovery from it.

I also met with some satisfaction, from Mr. Bunyan's book before-mentioned, wherein he says, 'Where does Christ require any such qualification, in those who are coming to him for life. ' Come then for life, and trouble not thy head about such objections against thyself, and leave God and Christ, to glorify themselves in the salvation, of such a worm as thou art. God propounds life to sinners, as an argument to prevail with them to come for life.'

These considerations answered the desired end. But my trouble did not end here. Another great obstruction lay in the way of my peace and hope.

I thought if I was a child of God, and an heir of the heavenly inheritance, I should have some word of promise brought home to my soul with such invincible power, as fully to assure me of it. This I supposed was universally felt and known, at one time or other, by all who could with propriety say he called me by his grace, and revealed his Son in me, as the hope of glory. For this most desirable blessing, I sought the Lord frequently,

quently, and with great importunity, but I thought he did not answer me, and my uneasiness was much encreased by those words of St. Paul, In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Sometimes indeed a promise came into my mind, but I was afraid to lay hold of it, I thought that would be presumption. And I was ready to say, it is in vain to wait for the Lord any longer; and inclined to think, that he had no design to have mercy upon me. But God who comforteth them who are cast down, and will not suffer a sincere seeking soul to be tempted, above what he is able to bear, gave me some little support, from the two following portions of scripture. It is good for a man both to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God.† And I never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.‡ Yet I could not comfortably close in with Christ, or think that a saving change had passed upon me, because I did not feel the operations of divine power, in that extraordinary manner, I prescribed to God, for as he did not answer me in my own way, I was ready to conclude, that there was no mercy for me. I was like that nobleman, who would not believe, except he saw signs and wonders.

My distress was great, uncertainty was insupportable, in an affair of such moment, as the salvation of my soul. I was far from coming to a conclusion, that I was born again, and passed from death unto life. This I anxiously sought after, and was greatly desirous to know. I was afraid to venture upon the gracious and all-sufficient

* Eph. i. 13. 14. † Lament. 3. 26. ‡ Isa. xlv. 19.

ent Savior, by a direct act of faith, my faith was too small and weak for that.

After much perplexity, and great agitation of mind for near two years, my knowledge in divine things was somewhat enlarged, I considered that there were two ways of coming to a settled persuasion, that my state was good, and that I might entertain an hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began. The one, by the sealing evidences of the spirit. After that ye believed, says the apostle, ye were sealed, which is the earnest of the inheritance, and the other by self-examination. To this we are exhorted, Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup.|| That is, let a man search his heart by the sacred scriptures, and see whether he is a christian indeed, and fit to receive the Lord's supper. So it is said, examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.* This work I was resolved to set about, and I concluded, that if I could discover that in my soul, which answers to the description of the people of God in his word, I might hope, upon the credit of the sacred writings, that I was born again, and entitled to the kingdom of heaven. In this way I came to a fixed persuasion, that God had begun a good work upon my soul, and would carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. And I venture to say unto thee, O thou fearful and trembling christian, if thou canst do no better, go and do thou likewise.

When I entered upon this work, first of all I looked into my heart, to see how it stood affected, in regard to sin. And I found, that it was the

the abominable thing, that my soul most of all hated. I watched, prayed, and strove against it, and wanted, if possible, to live without it. These were times, when I thought I could die, to be wholly free from it. I greatly disliked vain imaginations, and vain and sinful company. I knew it was not so with me in times past; therefore judged, that I was a partaker of the sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit, which he bestows upon none but such as he designs to make meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

I now enquired after my faith. O my soul, dost thou believe on the Son of God. Hast thou that faith which is of the operation of God, enabling of you to admire the blessed Jesus, as the most amiable of all objects. I did thus admire him; I saw such a beauty, glory and excellency in him, as drew forth my most ardent wishes, to know that he was mine, and that I was his. He was indeed in my view the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. And though I was afraid to say he loved me, and gave himself for me, and to venture my soul upon him, with a full persuasion of his acceptance of me, yet I felt that I loved him, and was willing to give myself and my all to him. I preferred him to every thing I knew, and longed to be with him to behold his glory. So far as I was acquainted with my heart, I preferred Christ, with all the calamities incident to human nature, rather than live in the greatest ease and splendor without him. Surely then I thought, I must have saving faith; for it is said, to you that believe, he is precious.*

In regard to those, whom I judged to be the people of God, I found a great and sincere affection

* 1 Pet. ii. 7.

tion for them. They were in my esteem, the excellent of the earth, and in them I took great delight. They were my chief associates. I became a companion of them that feared God. From hence I concluded, that I was passed from death unto life, because I loved the brethren.[†]

I read the word of God, with a new understanding, and unusual affection. It was at times, sweet to my taste as honey, or the honey-comb. Meditation upon it at some seasons, was so delightful, that the thought of returning to the world and losing this pleasing frame of mind, gave me trouble. Now when I came to consider, that formerly I paid no regard to the sacred writings, I thought that such an alteration, could never have taken place, had not the spirit of God, by the working of his power produced the change.

I now loved the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honor dwelleth, and longed for the return of the sabbath, that I might hear his word. This was unusual, and a farther proof to me, that old things were passed away, and all things become new.

I apprehended, that the natural enmity of my mind to God was removed, because he appeared in his glorious and amiable perfections, a most delightful object. My soul thirsted for him, I longed for a sense of his love, and to have fellowship and communion with him. I thought I must love God, because it was a great grief to me that I loved him no more; and I was now desirous of manifesting my love to him by universal obedience to his commandments, and doing all in my power, to advance his glory amongst the children of men.

Thus

[†] 1 John iii. 14.

Thus in the way of self-examination, I came to a full perswasion, that GOD had begun a good work in me, which he would carry on to the day of Jesus Christ. And that if he had designed to destroy me, he would not have shewn such things as these.

A N H Y M N.

God the only refuge of the troubled mind.

DEAR refuge of my weary soul,
On thee, when sorrows rise,
On thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies.

While hope revives, though press'd with fears,
And I can say, " My GOD,
Beneath thy seat I spread my cares,
And pour my woes abroad.

To thee I tell each rising grief,
For thou alone canst heal ;
Thy word can bring a sweet relief,
For every pain I feel.

But oh ! when gloomy doubts prevail,
I fear to call thee mine ;
The springs of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline.

Yet gracious GOD, where shall I flee?
 Thou art my only trust;
 And still my soul would cleave to thee,
 Though prostrate in the dust.

Hast thou not bid me seek thy face?
 And shall I seek in vain?
 And can the ear of sovereign grace
 Be deaf when I complain.

No, still the ear of sovereign grace
 Attends the mourner's prayer;
 O may I ever find access
 To breathe my sorrows there!

Thy mercy-seat is open still,
 Here let my soul retreat;
 With humble hope attend thy will,
 And wait beneath thy feet.

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4 OC '58

THE END:

